

6th February 1923]

The Sivaganga zamindari.

791 Q.—Mr. R. K. SHANMUKHAM CHETTIYAR: Will the hon. the Home Member be pleased to state—

(1) what the cash balance in the Sivaganga zamindari was when the present Estate Collector took charge; what it is to-day;

(2) why the Estate Collector withdrew from the proposal to finance the Manamadura-Sivaganga railway notwithstanding the understanding with the Ramnad District Board; and

(3) whether it is a fact that the peshkash of the Sivaganga estate for December 1922 has not been paid in time for want of funds?

A.—(1) The Government are not prepared to furnish the information asked for in this clause which does not relate to matters of public concern.

(2) The Government have no information.

(3) No.

The RAJA OF RAMNAD :—“ I do not know why the Government say that they are not prepared to furnish the information. Previously I asked for this information and then they said the same. But on that occasion I was not present to ask a supplementary question. This is a matter of public concern. The estate is in the management of the Court of Wards. We ask for information with regard to it, and we are told that it does not relate to a matter of public concern. I do not know if the Court of Wards administration is not a matter of public concern what else would be. I want some further information in the matter if the hon. Member will be good enough to give it.”

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP :—“ Is that as regards clause (2), Sir ? ”

The RAJA OF RAMNAD :—“ As regards clause (1) ”

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP :—“ I am afraid, Sir, I have nothing to add to the statement made there in answer to it. The Government have not the actual details as to what the actual cash balance in the zamindari was when the present Estate Collector took charge, and that is not a matter of public concern.”

The RAJA OF RAMNAD :—“ There is a great misapprehension in the minds of the people who are interested in the administration of the estate by the Court of Wards that the financial administration is not at all satisfactory, while statements to the contrary are made in certain quarters. I ask if such an unfavourable impression should be allowed to gain ground. It is for that purpose I ask that an assurance should be given that there will be no room for such an impression.”

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP :—“ I am quite prepared to give the assurance.”

The RAJA OF RAMNAD :—“ With reference to clause (2), will the hon. Member be pleased to call for the information ? ”

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP :—“ No, Sir. I do not think there is any reason for finding out why the Estate Collector was not prepared to spend money on the Manamadura-Sivaganga railway. I can only assume that it is a matter purely for the Estate Collector.”

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Mr. V. P. PAKKIRISWAMI PILLAI :—“ Is not the Court of Wards a matter of public concern? The administration report of the Court of Wards is published by the Government for public information.”

The hon. Mr. A. R. KNAPP :—“ I did not say that the Court of Wards is not a public concern. But the details as to the actual finances of the zamindari are not matters of public concern.”

II

ACT ASSENTED TO BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

The hon. the PRESIDENT announced that the Prince of Arcot Endowments Act received the assent of His Excellency the Governor-General on the 17th January 1923.

III

COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL.

The SECRETARY laid on the table * proceedings of the 22nd and 23rd meetings for 1922-23 of the Standing Finance Committee of the Madras Legislative Council held on the 27th and 29th January 1923, respectively.

IV

A BILL TO AMEND THE MADRAS STAMP (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1922.

The hon. Khan Bahadur Sir MUHAMMAD HABIB-UL-LAH SAHIB Bahadur :—“ Sir, I beg to introduce a Bill to amend the Madras Stamp (Amendment) Act, 1922. The Bill was published a few weeks ago for public information. It is a very small and non-contentious measure. It does not contain more than three clauses. The first clause is merely preliminary; clause 2 seeks to correct an error which unfortunately crept in in section 8 of the Amendment Act. What was therein contemplated was the amendment of sub-section (1) of section 23-A, but by an error sub-section (1) (b) was erroneously quoted. It is now sought to eliminate the letter ‘(b)’.

“ Clause 3 consists of three sub-clauses. Sub-clause (a) is merely intended for the purpose of correcting an arithmetical error, and sub-clause (c) seeks to rectify an unfortunate omission, whereas sub-clause (b) is intended to meet the difficulty arising from the absence of stamps of the denominations of three pies and nine pies which are referred to in article 5 (b) of the Schedule. I may inform the House that the Government of India have already issued their notification in exercise of the powers conferred by the Indian Stamp Act, 1899, to the following effect :

Notwithstanding anything contained in these rules, whenever the stamp duty payable under the Act in respect of any instrument cannot be paid exactly by reason of the fact that the necessary stamps are not in circulation, the amount by which the payment of duty shall on that account be in defect shall be made up by the affixing of one anna and half anna adhesive stamps.

“ One anna is intended in the case of instruments for which nine pies are prescribed and half-anna in the case of instruments for which three pies are prescribed. Stamps for nine pies and three pies do not exist at the present moment, and it does not appear economical to print and supply them to the public. It is for these reasons, Sir, that this small Amendment Bill has been introduced to-day, and I beg to move that it be read in Council.”

The hon. Sir K. SRINIVASA AYYANGAR :—“ I second it.”

The motion was put to the House and carried.

* Vide Appendices A and B at pages 1780 and 1782 infra.